

CHAPS

terrence
HIGGINS
TRUST



GB

**Welcome to
GAY Britain**

Welcome

This booklet is for gay and bisexual men from overseas who are living in England and Wales.

Its purpose is to keep you safe and well, while letting you get the most out of living here.

Keep it handy wherever you go – you never know when you might need it.

You can find more information on everything in the booklet at:

**[www.chapsonline.org.uk/
gaybritain](http://www.chapsonline.org.uk/gaybritain)**

Gay Britain

It is legal to be gay or bisexual in Britain. There's nothing to fear from the government or the police. Compared with many countries, Britain's laws are very liberal. Lesbian and gay people enjoy many of the same rights as straight people. For example:

- Discrimination because you're gay is illegal; at work, or the doctors, in hotels, or shops. In fact anywhere providing you 'goods and services'.
- You're allowed to 'get married' to a partner of the same sex (but not in places of worship). This is called a civil partnership and gives you the same legal rights and responsibilities as in a heterosexual marriage.
- Laws relating to sexual activity, such as the legal age to start having sex (16), are the same for everyone.





There are openly gay men in all walks of public life, including politics and the media. And the gay 'scene' in some of Britain's major cities is exciting and lively.

But not everyone in Britain has liberal attitudes towards homosexuality. Homophobia and prejudice still exist and some gay people say they expect some discrimination.

Contact

If you experience discrimination because you're gay, the Equality and Human Rights Commission can help.

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Tel: England: **0845 604 6610**

(interpretation available)

Tel: Wales: **0845 604 8810**

(interpretation available)

The gay scene

The gay 'scene' refers to the places where gay and bisexual men go when they want to meet, have fun, party and find boyfriends and sexual partners. These include bars, pubs, clubs, saunas, gyms and sex shops.

Although for many the scene is fun and exciting, for others it's not always a friendly, welcoming place. It's often about sex, alcohol and recreational drugs. That can be a dangerous mix, leading to risky sexual behaviour and problems relating to alcohol and drugs.

Drugs and alcohol can make you more likely to do things you wouldn't normally do. This includes having sex that puts you at risk of picking up or passing on HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



Stay safe on the scene:

- Try not to go clubbing alone.
- Don't leave your drink unattended, as it could have drugs added to it (be 'spiked').
- You can't tell by looking at someone if they are HIV positive or negative. (If you have had a test for HIV and the results show you have it, this is called HIV positive).
- Don't assume that someone will tell you if they are HIV negative or positive. There are many reasons why people don't say.
- If someone is happy to have sex without a condom, it doesn't mean they are free from HIV or other STIs.
- Try to carry condoms and lube with you always.

You can find out more about drugs, alcohol and staying safe at:

www.tht.org.uk/drugfucked



Sex outside: cruising safely

It's legal to have sex in public, such as in parks, as long as no one can see you. It's not legal to have sex in public toilets.

There are many spaces – called cruising grounds – where men meet to have sex with men. But these places can also attract muggers and those wanting to attack gay men.

Stay safe when cruising:

- Check out the cruising site in daylight so you know how to escape if there's trouble.
- Take a whistle or a personal alarm to scare off troublemakers or to attract help.
- Don't take any valuables, credit cards, or much money, with you.
- It's best not to go cruising if you're drunk or high, as alcohol and drugs will affect the decisions you make about the kind of sex you have.
- Take condoms and lube.





If you need to call the police, dial the emergency telephone number: **999** or **112**.

Meeting people away from the scene

The gay scene is not the only place for making new friends.

There are social activity clubs and groups, as well as sports clubs, just for gay men. Get more information at:

www.outforsport.org

www.gmfafa.org.uk/theguide

Or contact the gay men's organisations listed in the Help! section at the back of this leaflet.



Sex talk

Gay sex has its own language. Getting what you want, or saying no to what you don't want, is easier if you understand what's being said.

Here's a simple guide to what you might hear:

Sex talk	Meaning
arse/ass/butt/bum/batty	<i>bottom/backside</i>
balls	<i>testicles</i>
barebacking (BB)	<i>anal sex without condoms</i>
bent/batty man/fag/faggot	<i>gay</i>
bottom	<i>man who takes the passive role in anal sex</i>
blow job	<i>oral sex</i>
butch	<i>masculine</i>
camp	<i>effeminate</i>
the clap	<i>gonorrhoea</i>
clap clinic	<i>sexual health clinic</i>
'in the closet'	<i>hiding your sexuality</i>
cock/dick/knob	<i>penis</i>
come out	<i>be open about your sexuality</i>
come	<i>ejaculate semen</i>
cottage	<i>toilet</i>

cottage/go cottaging	<i>look for sex in toilets</i>
cruise	<i>look for sex</i>
cum	<i>sperm/ semen</i>
drag/in drag/drag queen	<i>wear(ing) women's clothes</i>
dyke	<i>lesbian</i>
fancy	<i>find someone attractive</i>
hard-on/stiffie	<i>erection</i>
hung, well hung	<i>has large penis</i>
lube	<i>lubricant</i>
neg	<i>HIV negative</i>
poz, positive	<i>HIV positive</i>
rent boy	<i>male prostitute</i>
rubber/rubber johnnie	<i>condom</i>
shag/screw	<i>fuck</i>
snog	<i>kiss</i>
suck/suck off	<i>give someone oral sex</i>
top	<i>man who takes active role in anal sex</i>
tranny	<i>transvestite, man who wears women's clothes</i>
wank/wank off	<i>masturbate</i>
versatile	<i>both active and passive in anal sex</i>

HIV

HIV in the UK

There's a serious HIV epidemic among gay and bisexual men in Britain.



About 1 in 20 gay and bisexual men in England and Wales is HIV positive. In some cities it is around 1 in 10, while in London and Brighton, the number is up to 1 in 7 or 8. And the epidemic is growing.

HIV weakens the immune system. Having HIV can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). This is when someone's immune system can no longer cope because of damage caused by HIV and they start to get certain serious illnesses.

Treatment not cure

There's no vaccine or cure for HIV. But in Britain, having HIV does not mean you're going to die early because you can get treatment to keep you well. Many people with HIV can now expect to live as long as those without HIV, if they are treated.

Symptoms

In the weeks after infection you may get symptoms that are like having flu, such as a fever, swollen glands, sore throat or a rash. This is called a sero-conversion illness. Not everyone gets this.

HIV may then cause no symptoms for months or years. But over time, you may get infections caused by your immune system getting weaker.

How HIV is passed on

HIV is found in the body fluids of an infected person. Only some fluids have enough HIV to infect someone. In men these fluids are blood, sperm/cum and pre-cum.

There can also be enough HIV in the coating of the inside of the anus to pass the infection on.

Spit, sweat and urine don't have enough HIV in them to infect someone.

What kind of sex is risky?

Most men pick up or pass on HIV during anal sex without a condom (either fucking or being fucked). A small number get it or pass it on through oral sex.

Other types of sex – such as mutual masturbation, rimming, or kissing – are basically safe. But doing these could put you at risk of getting other STIs.

You are more at risk of getting HIV if you get fucked (are 'bottom' or 'passive'). But you are more at risk of passing on HIV if you are fucking (being 'top' or 'active'). This is because the lining of the anus is delicate and easily torn, and can absorb liquids. This lets HIV get into the bloodstream. So although any anal sex is risky, the biggest risk from HIV is when infected sperm gets inside someone's anus.

HIV prevention: condoms and lube

Nothing stops HIV better during sex than condoms. If they're used properly, they shouldn't split or come off. Some tips:

- Use the right size – condoms come in different sizes.
- Be careful not to tear the condom when you open the packet.
- Only put the condom on when the penis is fully hard.



- Roll the condom the whole way down the penis.
- Squeeze out any trapped air.
- Use lots of water-based lubricant (lube) on the outside of the condom and around the arsehole.
- After about 30 minutes of action, condoms are more likely to split, so put a new one on.
- When pulling out, grip the base of the condom to make sure it doesn't come off.

For tips on using condoms visit

www.chapsonline.org.uk/getiton

Getting free condoms and lube

Condoms are available free at sexual health and HIV clinics and organisations (see the Help! section), and some doctors' surgeries and health centres. You may also find them in gay venues.

What to do if you have unsafe sex or the condom breaks: PEP

There is a short time between HIV entering the bloodstream and the infection becoming permanent. If you are HIV negative taking medication called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) during this time can kill the virus.

PEP works best if you take it less than 24 hours after being put at risk. After 72 hours (3 days) it is too late.

PEP is a course of anti-HIV drugs that have to be taken for one month. It isn't guaranteed to work, so it isn't a reliable alternative to using condoms. And it can cause side-effects, such as nausea and diarrhoea.

PEP is available free from the emergency departments of some hospitals and from sexual health clinics (see 'Where to get tested').

If you need help getting PEP:

Tel: THT Direct on 0845 12 21 200.

(interpretation service available)

www.chapsonline.org.uk/pep

HIV prevention: oral sex

Only a small number of men get, or pass on HIV, through oral sex. You can reduce the risk if:

- you and your partner keep cum out of your mouths
- you avoid oral sex if your mouth, throat, gums or penis are sore, damaged or infected
- you use condoms.

HIV testing and treatment

Anyone can have an HIV test free – it doesn't matter what your immigration status is.

HIV tests are confidential. No one will know your result except you and the clinic staff. The clinic will not tell the immigration authorities anything. You can even be anonymous or give a false name and address.

Why get tested?

- If you're HIV positive, the sooner you know, the sooner you can start looking after your health.
- HIV treatment is very effective. You can expect to lead a healthy, normal life. The side-effects are not as bad as they used to be and many people only need to take 1 to 3 pills a day. HIV treatment is free, as long as you're in the UK legally.
- Treatment works best if you start taking it before HIV has done too much damage to your immune system.
- You can have safer sex to avoid passing HIV on to others.
- There is lots of free support, advice and counselling to help you.

- If you find out that you're HIV positive it's up to you to decide who you tell.

Where to get tested?

You can get free tests at genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinics and rapid test clinics.

GUM clinics are also called sexual health clinics and are usually in hospitals.

Find your nearest clinic:

Tel: **THT Direct: 0845 12 21 200.**

(interpretation service available)

www.tht.org.uk/GUM

Tel: **NHS Direct: 0845 4647.**

(interpretation service available)

www.youchoose.org.uk

(Click on 'testing centres')

Some sexual health organisations, including THT, offer 1-hour HIV tests. You can also get tested at a private clinic but you will have to pay.

Where to get HIV treatment?

HIV treatment and care is available through specialist HIV clinics. Find your nearest clinic through THT Direct or NHS Direct.

Other sexually transmitted infections

There are lots of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that can be caught during sex.

The most common infections among gay men are non-specific urethritis (NSU), gonorrhoea, warts, chlamydia and herpes. Syphilis is on the increase.

STIs are mainly passed on through anal and oral sex without condoms.

But they can be also spread through skin to skin contact and other types of sexual contact.



How do I know if I've got an STI?

Some STIs don't have any symptoms or may not cause symptoms for a long time. This is why regular sexual health check-ups are a good idea.

Some of the most common symptoms include:

- discharge from your penis and/or anus
- pain when you urinate or shit
- sores or blisters on your penis and/or anus, mouth and throat
- itching around your penis and genitals and/or anus
- cold or flu-like symptoms.

Prevention, testing and treatment

Condoms can stop many STIs if they're used properly. Most STIs can be cured with treatment. Some, such as herpes and HIV, can be controlled by drugs, but not cured.

If they're not treated, STIs can cause serious health problems or damage to your body, even if you don't have any symptoms.

Where to get tested?

STI tests, treatment and vaccinations are available in the same places as HIV tests (see the HIV section).

More information:

www.chapsonline.org.uk/infections

Health matters

Healthcare in Britain is provided by the National Health Service (NHS). For Britons it's mainly free.

Whether you'll have to pay or not depends on a number of things, such as where you're from, how long you've been here and your immigration status.

Treatment that's free for everyone includes:

- emergency treatment, either in a hospital Accident and Emergency department (A&E) or at a doctor's surgery
- testing and treatment for STIs
- testing and counselling for HIV.

HIV treatment is free for everyone unless you're here illegally.

Doctors (GPs)

Doctors who treat common illnesses are usually called GPs (general practitioner).

Go to your GP first if you're unwell and if a pharmacist (chemist) can't help. GPs diagnose and prescribe drugs, or can refer you to specialists who usually work in hospitals.

Who can see a GP free?

- People from the European Economic Area and Switzerland.
- Migrants who are 'ordinarily resident' in the UK (planning to stay here for at least two or three years).
- Refugees and asylum seekers.
- Students here for more than six months.

Hospitals

Specialist services are usually provided in hospitals. But unless it's an emergency, you'll need to see a GP first.

Who can get hospital treatment free?

- The same categories of people who can see a GP free.
- People employed by companies registered in the UK.
- People from a country that has a 'reciprocal agreement' with the UK.



Each GP surgery and hospital finally decides who will have to pay and who will not. By law they cannot refuse you because of your sexual orientation.

Dentists

Like most Britons, you'll probably have to pay to see a dentist. If you're 'ordinarily resident' and on a low income, you may be able to get free treatment.

To find out if you have to pay, or to find a health service, contact:

your local gay or sexual health organisation (see Help! section) or the NHS.

Tel: **NHS Direct 0845 4647.**

(interpretation service available)

www.nhs.uk

Help if you can't get free treatment and can't pay

Medecins du Monde

Tel: **020 7515 7534**

Visas and immigration issues

Britain's immigration system is complicated and can change. If you need advice on immigration issues, it's important to find a good adviser.



This means someone who either has accreditation (official approval) from the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner or is a qualified immigration solicitor.

People who are not accredited are legally only allowed to give you very basic information.

Finding an adviser

Community Legal Advice

Has a comprehensive directory, the CLS Legal Adviser Directory, on its website.

Tel: **0845 345 4345**

www.clsdirect.org.uk

Immigration Advisory Service (IAS)

Offices across UK. Can provide information in different languages.

www.iasuk.org

Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner

Find details of advisers on its website.

Tel: **0845 000 0046**

www.oisc.gov.uk

Refugee Action Lesbian and Gay Asylum Team

Tel: **020 7654 0686**

UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group

Provides information and advice on immigration rights for same-sex couples and supports gay asylum seekers. Has list of 'gay friendly' solicitors.

www.uklgig.org.uk

Paying for advice and legal representation

Getting initial advice from a solicitor is usually free but after that you have to pay. If you don't have much money, you may be able to get help with paying. This is called Legal Aid. There are strict guidelines about who qualifies for Legal Aid.

Community Legal Advice has information about Legal Aid on its website.

www.clsdirect.org.uk

Tel: **0845 345 4345**



Learning English

There are many English language courses available but standards and prices vary. Only priority groups, such as some refugees, asylum seekers and unemployed migrants, may be able to get free tuition.

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is a government-backed learning system for adults. Courses range from beginner to advanced.

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classes are tailored to specific areas of employment, such as catering.

To find out more:

Directgov

www.direct.gov.uk

(go to the 'improving your skills' section)

0800 100 900 (*free advice in many languages*)

Multikulti

www.multikulti.org.uk

(*information available in many languages*)

British Council Learning

Lists courses all over the UK, but most are not free.

www.britishcouncil.org/learning



Money matters

If you're having problems paying for life in Britain, you may be able to get help from what Britons call 'benefits' or 'social security'. These cover housing, income and council tax.

The benefits system is complicated. Whether you qualify for help depends on lots of things, such as your nationality, immigration status and earnings, so you will need specialist advice.

How immigration status affects whether you can get benefits

- If your visa says 'no recourse to public funds' you will probably not be able to get any social security benefits.
- If you have 'unlimited leave to remain' you may be entitled to some benefits. Seek advice.
- EEA and Swiss nationals and nationals from Croatia, Macedonia, Turkey, Nigeria, Morocco and Tunisia may be entitled to some benefits if you have the 'right to reside'. Seek advice.
- 'Refugee status' entitles you to all benefits and social security.

Getting specialist advice

The Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) service provides free, confidential advice. There are CAB offices all over Britain which are listed on its website. www.adviceguide.org.uk

Emergency funding

Citizens Advice Bureaux can advise you.

Crusaid Hardship Fund. For people with HIV.

Tel: **020 7539 3881**

An HIV organisation will have to apply on your behalf. Some are listed at the back of this leaflet.

Fund for Human Need

Tel: **01757 706 040**



Help!

Gay and bisexual, HIV and sexual health specialist organisations

These organisations offer confidential and free support, advice and information.

Across Britain

Terrence Higgins Trust
0845 1221 200
(interpretation available)
www.tht.org.uk

Devon and Cornwall

The Eddystone Trust
01752 257 077
www.eddystone.org.uk

Leicestershire

Trade
0116 254 1747
www.tradesexualhealth.com

Liverpool

The Armistead Project
0870 990 8996
www.armisteadcentre.co.uk

London

GMFA
020 7738 6872
www.gmfa.org.uk

Manchester

The Lesbian and
Gay Foundation
0161 235 8035
www.lgf.org.uk

Yorkshire

Centre for HIV and Sexual Health
(Sheffield)
0114 226 1900
www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk

Yorkshire Mesmac
0113 244 4209
www.mesmac.co.uk

General help

Citizens Advice Bureaux
Free, confidential information
and advice on employment rights,
discrimination, benefits, housing
and financial issues.
3,000 offices across UK
www.adviceguide.org.uk

Multikulti
A website in many languages.
Advice and information on debt,
employment, health, education,
immigration, racism and
discrimination
www.multikulti.org.uk

English edition

The HIV and sexual health charity for life

Website: www.tht.org.uk **THT Direct:** 0845 12 21 200

Registered office: 314-320 Gray's Inn Road, London

WC1X 8DP **Tel:** 020 7812 1600 **Email:** info@tht.org.uk

© Terrence Higgins Trust, July 2008. Terrence Higgins Trust is a registered charity no. 288527. Company reg. no.1778149. Registered in England and Wales. A company limited by guarantee.

Design **Felton Communication** 020 7405 0900 Ref: 10821.1